

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 4 ROME 4041

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEBR, US, IT
SUBJECT: A DISSENTING VIEW OF AMERICAN POLICY IN ITALY

REF: ROME 3542

THIS TELEGRAM TRANSMITS THE DISSENTING VIEW ON AMERICAN POLICY
IN ITALY WHICH WAS REFERRED TO IN SECTION III OF THE
REFERENCE MESSAGE.

PART I: THE WEAKNESSES OF EXISTING POLICY

1. "PRESERVATION OF ITALY AS WESTERN-ORIENTED DEMOCRACY
AND A FULL PARTICIPANT IN ATLANTIC AND WESTERN EUROPEAN
INSTITUTIONS" AND "STRENGTHENED DEMOCRATIC FORCES"--THESE
LONG-ENSHRINED GOALS OF AMERICAN POLICY IN ITALY WELL
SERVE THE PURPOSES OF THE USUAL TYPE OF ANNUAL POLICY RE-
VIEW. SINCE THE GOALS SOUND UNEXCEPTIONABLE, IT IS DIFFICULT
TO CHALLENGE THESE FUNDAMENTAL TENETS OF OUR POLICY. THE
PROBLEM ARISES FROM THE FACT THAT THESE OBJECTIVES ARE
INVARIABLY USED TO ENTICE THE POLICY REVIEWER TO THE
CONCLUSION THAT THE UNITED STATES IS CO-RESPONSIBLE FOR
ACHIEVING THEM. APPROACHING THE MATTER IN THIS WAY IS
A TRICK THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS PLAYED ON ITSELF FOR
SO LONG THAT OUR POLICY HAS NOT BEEN SUBJECT TO

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RADICAL QUESTIONING ED REMAINS FIXED IN PURSUIT OF
OBJECTIVES THAT ARE INCREASINGLY DIVORCED FROM DEVELOP-
MENTS IN ITALY AND INCONSISTENT WITH OUR CONTEMPORARY
NATIONAL INTEREST.

INTERVENTIONIST ATTITUDE AND LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY
2. FOR THIRTY YEARS AMERICAN POLICY IN ITALY HAS BEEN

BASED ON THE SYLLOGISM THAT THE COMMUNIST THREAT IS SO ACUTE, AMERICAN INTERESTS ARE SO VITAL AND ITALY IS SO WEAK THAT OUR INVOLVEMENT IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL AFFAIRS IS WARRANTED AND NECESSARY. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS ROBUST PHILOSOPHY OUR POLICY FOSTERS AND INTERVENTIONIST ATTITUDE THAT PERVADES OUR WHOLE RELATIONSHIP WITH ITALY. WE ACCEPT--AND PRACTICE--A POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP AND DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT THAT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE IN ANOTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY.

3. THE WORST EXCESSES OF THIS APPROACH--FINANCING OF PARTIES AND SO ON--HAVE BEEN ENDED. BUT THE STATE OF MIND REMAINS. IT IS USED TO SANCTION AN INFLATED INTELLIGENCE OPERATION. IT DRAWS US INTO A PARTISAN STANCE IN DAY-TO-DAY ITALIAN POLITICS. IT UNDERLAYS THE APPROACH TO THE LAST ANDREOTTI VISIT TO WASHINGTON, THE ESSENCE OF WHICH WAS A VIRTUAL DEAL THAT WE WOULD SUPPORT HIM ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT HE WOULD PERMIT THE COMMUNISTS NO FURTHER ROLE IN GOVERNMENT. IT WAS THE UNSPOKEN PREMISE OF THE JANUARY 12 STATE DEPARTMENT DECLARATION. IT ANIMATES SUCH STATEMENTS AS THAT FROM THE REFTEL, "THE MISSION HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN ENCOURAGING RENEWAL AND REFORM IN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY." WHAT OTHER EMBASSY IN A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY IN EUROPE WOULD

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INCLUDE A SIMILAR GOAL AMONG POLICY OBJECTIVES?

4. WELL-INTENTIONED THOUGH OUR OBJECTIVE DOUBTLESS IS, WE WOULD DO WELL TO ASK OURSELVES BY WHAT RIGHT WE CLAIM THIS ROLE--THAT WE HAVE AS GOOD OR BETTER AN UNDERSTANDING OF ITALIAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY AND WHAT IS BEST FOR THIS COUNTRY THAN THE AUTOCHTHONOUS THEMSELVES; THAT THE NATIONAL INTERESTS OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES PERFECTLY COINCIDE; OR THAT OUR INTERESTS SHOULD HAVE PRIORITY OVER THEIRS. THE APPROACH IS SOMETIMES JUSTIFIED BY SUCH ARGUMENTS AS: THE ISSUES AT STAKE ARE UNIQUELY GRAVE; INTERVENTION IS ACCEPTABLE BUT WOULD BE INEFFECTIVE ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE; THE ITALIANS "ASK FOR IT." BUT WHATEVER THE JUSTIFICATION AND HOWEVER MORALLY AND POLITICALLY QUESTIONABLE EACH OF THESE HYPOTHESES MAY BE, THE RESULT IS AN APPROACH WHICH IMPLIES THAT, IN THE VIEW OF AMERICAN POLICY-MAKER, ITALY IS A COUNTRY OF LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY.

5. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS APPROACH ARE PROFOUND. BY TAKING IT UPON OURSELVES TO TRY TO GUIDE

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, WE ULTIMATELY MAKE OURSELVES CO-RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLITICAL DESTINY OF ITALY. CONVERSELY, OUR APPROACH WEAKENS THIS COUNTRY BY ALLOWING ITS POLITICAL LEADERS--AND THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE--TO RETAIN AN ATTITUDE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE ON US.

6. IN THE LATTER RESPECT, HOWEVER, THINGS ARE GETTING OUT OF SYNC. IT APPEARS--AS THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS SEEMS TO SUGGEST--THAT ITALY HAS CROSSED AN IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL-POLITICAL WATERSHED IN THE COURSE OF THE PAST FEW MONTHS. THE WAY IT LOOKS TODAY, MOST ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADERS ARE EDGING THEIR WAY TOWARD AN INDEPENDENCE WHICH WE APPEAR NOT YET
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READY TO ACCORD THEM.

7. THE FIRST AIM OF A POLICY REVIEW SHOULD BE TO FACE THE FACT THAT, WHETHER IT WAS RIGHT OR WRONG IN THE PAST, OUR ACTIVIST ROLE IN ITALY HAS NOW BEEN PLAYED OUT AND OUR INTERVENTIONIST ATTITUDE MUST BE ENDED FOR THE GOOD OF BOTH SIDES.

ALLIANCE WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

8. A COROLLARY OF OUR POLICY APPROACH IS THAT WE HAVE FIRMLY ALLIED OURSELVES WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND SHOW TOWARD THEM A CLEAR FAVORITISM. THIS CLOSE ASSOCIATION HAS SEVERAL DISADVANTAGES. IT MAKES US A PARTISAN FACTOR IN ITALIAN POLITICAL LIFE. IT CAUSES US TO DOWNPLAY THE PARTY'S FAILURES AND TO OVERESTIMATE ITS APTITUDE FOR SELF-REFORM. IT MAKES US AN ACCESSORY TO THE CORRUPTION THAT INEVITABLY DEVELOPS IN ANY POWERFUL, PATRONAGE-BASED POLITICAL MACHINE ENTRENCHED IN POWER FOR THREE DECADES. FINALLY, THIS RELATIONSHIP IMPEDES US FROM ADJUSTING TO THE DEEP CHANGES WHICH THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM IS UNDERGOING.

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9. OUR POLICY HAS BEEN BASED ON THE INDEFINITE
POLITICAL DOMINANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. YET
THE STRUCTURE ON WHICH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL
CONTROL RESTS IS CHANGING RADICALLY AS A RESULT OF THE
POLARIZATION OF ITALIAN POLITICS AND THE CONSEQUENT
DECLINE OF THE LAY PARTIES. IN VIEW OF OUR TOTAL
COMMITMENT TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, WE HAVE
NO ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY. NOT SURPRISINGLY WE FIND
IT DIFFICULT TO FACE UP TO THIS NEW SITUATION AND
INSTEAD FOLLOW THE TACTIC OF HOPING TO PROP UP THE
OLD SYSTEM BY ENCOURAGING THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO
REFORM AND THE SOCIALISTS TO GO BACK INTO COALITION
WITH THEM. THERE ARE TWO FALLACIES IN THE APPROACH.
THE FIRST RELATES TO "STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY" IN
ITALY THROUGH THE REFORM OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.
WE SHOULD FRANKLY FACE THE FACT THAT IF WE HAVE
NOT SUCCEEDED IN "STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY" AFTER 30
YEARS OF ATTEMPTS, WE HAD BETTER GIVE UP. MOREOVER,
WE SHOULD ALSO BE HONEST ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE THAT
THE PERPETUATION OF A SINGLE PARTY IN POWER IS NOT
HEALTHY DEMOCRACY. THE SECOND ERROR IS THAT EVEN
WERE OUR TACTIC TO SUCCEED--AND IT IS FAR FROM CLEAR
THAT IT WILL--THE LEFT OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM AND
THE ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION WOULD THEN FALL ENTIRELY TO
THE COMMUNISTS. NOT ONLY WOULD THIS ENHANCE THE
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POSITION OF THE COMMUNISTS, IT IS OPEN TO SERIOUS
DOUBT WHETHER THE SOCIALIST PARTY COULD SURVIVE
AS A POLITICAL FORCE OF ANY WEIGHT.

AN UNCHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARD A CHANGING COMMUNIST PARTY
10. ANOTHER DEFECT OF OUR APPROACH--AND THE CRUX OF
THE MATTER--IS THE POLICY OF DOING WHAT WE CAN TO
RESIST AND WEAKEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN ORDER TO
KEEP IT OUT OF POWER. THE POLICY RESTS ON THE VIEW
THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS IN ESSENCE A LENINIST
ORGANIZATION, TIED TO THE SOVIET UNION AND ENGAGED
IN CONSPIRACY TO SEIZE COMPLETE POWER AND ESTABLISH

A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY OF THE EASTERN EUROPEAN SORT, WITH EFFECTS ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE. THE PARTY'S PRACTICAL COOPERATION WITH THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT SINCE 1976, IT RESPONSIBLE POSITION ON SUCH ISSUES AS PUBLIC ORDER, ITS CONSERVATIVE ECONOMIC POLICY, ITS FORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF NATO AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, BERLINGUER'S SPEECH TO THE 60TH PARTY CONGRESS AND THE DECISION OF THE CGIL TO LEAVE THE WFTU ARE VIEWED AS MASKING THE PARTY'S REAL INTENTIONS. THIS VIEWPOINT IS HELD BY FEWER AND FEWER ITALIANS AND ITS PLAUSIBILITY IS OPEN TO SERIOUS QUESTION.

11. OF THE NATURE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, GEORGE KENNAN HAS WRITTEN IN HIS MOST RECENT BOOK, "THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY HAS ALREADY EMANCIPATED ITSLEF VERY EXTENSIVELY FROM SOVIET IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL, AND WOULD BE EVEN MORE INDEPENDENT IF IT WERE TO COME INTO A SHARE IN THE GOVERNMENTAL POWER IN ITALY. THE RANK AND FILE ARE FOR THE MOST PART NOT COMMUNISTS AT ALL IN MOSCOW'S TERMS. THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION WITH WHICH THEY ARE ASSOCIATED

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IS NOT AT ALL THAT OF RUSSIA. THEY KNOW NEXT TO NOTHING OF RUSSIAN COMMUNISM. THE DISCIPLINE OF POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY WOULD MOVE THEM EVEN FARTHER FROM IT. THE LEADERS ARE, TO BE SURE, FIRM INTELLECTUAL MARXISTS, BUT PRIMARILY OF THE WESTERN VARIETY, NOT THE EASTERN."

12. WHETHER THIS POSITION OR THE OFFICIAL AMERICAN VIEW IS THE MORE TENABLE--AND THE ISSUE CANNOT BE SETTLED EXCEPT IN PRACTICE--IT IS CLEAR THAT THE POULAR ITALIAN PERCEPTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS DIVERGING INCREASINGLY FROM OUR OWN. AS ARRIGO LEVI WROTE IN FOREIGN POLICY A YEAR AGO, A MAJORITY OF NON-COMMUNIST ITALIANS, INCLUDING ANDREOTTI, PROBABLY CONSIDERS THAT "THE CHANGES UNDERGONE BY THE PCI DURING RECENT YEARS ARE REAL--THE PARTY LEADERS ARE MOSTLY SINCERE AND THE TREND OF CHANGE, PRODUCED MAINLY BY PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO A DEMOCRATIC ENVIRONMENT AND BY DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION, POINT IN A WESTERN, DEMOCRATIC DIRECTION--BUT THAT THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION IS FAR FROM COMPLETE AND SERIOUS CONTRADICTIONS REMAIN."

13. OUR UNCHANGING STANCE TOWARD A CHANGING COMMUNIST PARTY AND A CHANGING ATTITUDE OF THE ITALIAN ELECTORATE TOWARD IT IMPOSES ON US THREE MAJOR RISKS. FIRST, IT ENFEEBLES OUR CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND THE APPEAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. AS THE RECENTLY-RELEASED NSC

REPORT OF APRIL 1950 REVEALED, OUR INTERPRETATION
OF THE ATTRACTION OF ITALIAN COMMUNISM USED TO BE
THAT IT STEMMED FROM WIDESPREAD POVERTY AND THAT AS
ITALY RECOVERED ECONOMICALLY, THIS APPEAL WOULD
DECLINE AND DISAPPEAR. IN FACT THE REVERSE HAS BEEN
THE CASE. NOW WE HAVE NO REAL EXPLANATION, WHICH
IS AT LEAST AN ADVANCE OVER A FALSE EXPLANATION. BUT
WHAT WE ARE IGNORING, OR SETTING OUR FACE AGAINST, IS
ONE OF THE STRONGEST LATENT POLITICAL DESIRES OF THE
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ITALIAN PEOPLE: THE DESIRE FOR SOCIAL REFORM, THE
WISH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT AND THE LONGING
TO BRING TO AN END THREE DECADES OF CHRISTIAN DEMO-
CRATIC RULE(OR, AS SOME WOULD SAY, OF CHRISTIAN
DECMOCRATIC CORRUPTION). TO A GROWING NUMBER OF
ITALIANS, WE ARE SEEN AS AN OPPONENT NOT ONLY OF
COMMUNISM BUT OF THE CAUSES IT APPEARS TO CHAMPION--
SOCIAL REFORM, AN ALTERNATION OF GOVERNMENT AND HONEST
CIVIL ADMINSTRION.

14. SEOND, BY OPPOSING THE ENTRY OF THE COMMU-
NIST PARTY INTHE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY, WE HAVE
OPPOSED A SOLUTION TO THE PRESNET CRISIS WHICH
IS FAVORED BY 51 PERCENT OF THE POLITICAL FORCES IN ITALY.

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15. FINALLY WE PUT OURSELVES IN THE POSITION OF SEEMING NOT TO WANT THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO EVOLVE BUT INSTEAD OF APPEARING TO BE MORE COMFORTABLE IN THE OLD MANICHEAN WORLD OF A TOTALLY GOOD CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND A TOTALLY BAD COMMUNIST PARTY. THE ONLY HOPE FOR A HEALTHY AND STABLE DEMOCRACY IS THE EXISTENCE OF A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND, GIVEN THE STATE OF THINGS, THIS ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT BE ONE OR MORE OF THE LAY PARTIES BUT CAN ONLY BE THE COMMUNIST PARTY. THE EVOLUTION OF THAT PARTY WILL REQUIRE BOTH ENCOURAGEMENT AND CRITICISM. AS IT IS, WE ONLY CRITICIZE. WHAT MAXIM OF LOGIC OR DIPLOMACY CAN JUSTIFY CONDEMNING A PARTY WHEN IT SUPPORTS NATO JUST AS FIRMLY AS WHEN THAT PARTY OPPOSED NATO?

FALSE VALUE TO ITALY'S NATO ROLE

16. ANOTHER CONSEQUENCE OF OUR POLICY APPROACH IS TO GIVE ITALY'S MILITARY ROLE IN NATO GREATER IMPORTANCE THAN IS WARRANTED. THIS ARGUMENT IS OFTEN TURNED AROUND TO ARGUE THAT BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ITALY'S ROLE IN THE ALLIANCE, WE CAN LEGITIMATELY INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF WIDER ALLIANCE INTERESTS.

17. IN THE FIRST PLACE IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT
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THE ENTRY OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON ITALY'S NATO COMMITMENT. THE LEADERS OF THE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, THE ITALIAN EQUIVALENT OF THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, TAKE THE VIEW THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS COMMITTED TO THE MAINTENANCE OF THE EAST-WEST BALANCE AND CONSIDERS NATO ESSENTIAL TO THIS BALANCE. THEY BELIEVE ADEQUATE BUREAUCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE MADE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNISTS IN THE CABINET.

18. BUT EVEN IF THE WORST WERE TO HAPPEN AND THE COMMUNISTS WERE TO LEAD ITALY OUT OF NATO MILITARY INTEGRATION, THE RESULT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE BUT NOT SERIOUS. THE FACT HAS TO BE FACED THAT ITALY IN HER ENTIRE CENTURY OF EXISTENCE HAS NEVER MADE ANY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE EUROPEAN BALANCE OF POWER AND EXERTS NO APPRECIABLE WEIGHT IN THE CURRENT EAST-WEST BALANCE.

19. THE LOSS OF AMERICAN BASES IN ITALY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE DAMAGING TO OUR OWN AS WELL AS THE NATO POSITION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. BUT, AS IN THE CASE OF FRANCE, SOME ADJUSTMENTS CAN NO DOUBT

BE MADE AND, AGAIN AS IN THE CASE OF FRANCE, WE
DARE NOT MAKE IT A PRINCIPLE OF OUR FOREIGN
POLICY TO INVOLVE OURSELVES IN THE DOMESTIC
POLITICS OF AN ALLIED COUNTRY TO PREVENT THE CLOSURE
OF MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.

THE DAMAGE TO OUR LONG TERM INTERESTS
20. THE EFFECT OF OUR POLICY IS TO TRADUCE OUR DECICA-
TION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC SELF-DETERMINA-
TION, TO ASSOCIATE OURSELVES WITH THE CONSERVATIVE
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ELEMENT IN ITALIAN POLITICS, TO OPEN OURSELVES TO
MANIPULATION BY ONE PARTY OR ANOTHER OR BY ONE
GROUP OR ANOTHER WITHIN A CERTAIN PARTY AND
TO APPEAR TO IGNORE ALL THE VARIOUS SHORTCOMINGS
OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC RULE--CORRUPTION, LACK OF
SOCIAL REFORM, ABSENCE OF A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE
AND EVEN THE COMPROMISE OF A HEALTHY PARLIAMENTARY
SYSTEM--FOR THE SAKE OF PREVENTING THE COMMUNISTS, WITH
35 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, FROM HAVING ANY POLITICAL INFLUENCE.
THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT WE SHOULD EMBRACE THE
COMMUNISTS. THEY ARE NOT OUR FRIENDS. BUT IT IS
TO SAY THAT WE CANNOT FIGHT SOMEONE ELSE'S--THE
ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ITALIAN PEOPLE--
POLITICAL BATTLE FOR THEM. IN THE FIRST PLACE WE DARE
NOT TRY TO PIT OUR JUDGEMENT OF THE ITALIAN DOMESTIC
SITUATION AGAINST THEIRS. IN THE SECOND PLACE WE MUST
NOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE EXPLOITED EITHER BY
THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO COINVOLVE US IN THE PROCESS
OF ABSORBING THE COMMUNISTS INTO DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY
OR BY THOSE WHO WANT TO COINVOLVE US IN KEEPING THEM
OUT.

21. THE JANUARY 12 STATE DEPARTMENT DECLARATION
WAS EVIDENCE THAT WE HAVE NOT RECOGNIZED THIS
DANGER. THAT STATEMENT WAS THE DESCENDANT OF AN
APPROACH FORMULATED THIRTY YEARS AGO. THE REACTION
TO IT BOTH IN ITALY AND ELSEWHERE IN WESTERN EUROPE
DEMONSTRATED THAT ITS TIME HAS EXPIRED. THE ONLY
ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADERS TO SUPPORT THE STATEMENT
WERE PIER LUIGI ROMITA, THE HEAD OF THE SOCIAL DEMO-
CRATIC PARTY, A PARTY REPRESENTING 3 PERCENT OF THE
ITALIAN ELECTORATE, AND VALERIO ZANONE, HEAD
OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, REPRESENTING 1 PERCENT. AND EVEN
ROMITA AND HIS PARTY FAVOR THE ENTRY OF THE COMMUNIST
PARTY INTO THE MAJORITY. NO EUROPEAN ALLY SUPPORTED
THE STATEMENT WHICH WAS IN GENERAL VIEWED BY THEM AS
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ILLEGITIMATE IN ITS INTERFERENCE AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE
IN PROVING THE COMMUNISTS AN EXCELLENT ISSUE IN THE
NEXT ELECTION--THE NATURALLY SENSITIVE ONE OF
OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.

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22. PERHAPS THAT STATEMENT IS A GOOD CASE STUDY OF
OUR POSITION IN ITALY AT THE MOMENT. THE TIMING
AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DECLARATION SUGGEST THAT
IT WAS INTENDED NOT SIMPLY TO PUT THE RECORD
STRAIGHT ABOUT OUR VIEWS ON THE COMMUNIST ISSUE
BUT ALSO TO ENCOURAGE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC
BACKBENCHERS TO STAND UP TO THEIR LEADERSHIP AND
PREVENT MORO, ZACCAGNINI AND ANDREOTTI FROM AGREEING
TO THE ENTRY OF THE COMMUNISTS INTO THE MAJORITY.
THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESUMABLY KNEW ENOUGH ABOUT
THE CURRENT ITALIAN SITUATION TO APPRECIATE THAT
THIS RISKED PROVOKING A NATIONAL ELECTION, AN
ELECTION WHICH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADERS, IF NOT
WASHINGTON POLICY-MAKERS, ARE CONVINCED WILL LEAVE
THE COMMUNIST POSITION IMPROVED, MAKE ITALY MORE
DIFFICULT THAN EVER TO GOVERN AND POSTPONE STILL LONGER
EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE COUNTRY'S STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS.
AND WHAT HAPPENED? THE BACKBENCHERS "REVOLTED"
AND ITALY IS NOW IN ITS LONGEST GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS
OF THE POSTWAR PERIOD. TODAY IT APPEARS THAT THIS
CRISIS WILL SOON BE SETTLED WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN

THE MAJORITY. WHAT LESSON IS TO BE LEARNED--THT A
SOLUTION TO THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS WAS DELAYED FOR
SEVERAL MONTHS THANKS IN SOME PART TO OUR INFLUENCE
OR THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL BE IN THE MAJORITY DESPITE
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THAT INFLUENCE? IN THE FORMER CASE WE CAN BE FAULTED
FOR HAVING BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN A MOST IMPORTANT
AND DELICATE MATTER IN THIS COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LIFE
AND IN THE LATTER CASE WE CAN BE FAULTED FOR HAVING
REVEALED FOR ALL TO SEE THAT WE WERE INEFFECTIVE.

23. THE ULTIMATE AND MOST SERIOUS EFFECT OF OUR
POLICY IS TO DAMAGE OUR LONG-TERM INTERESTS IN
WESTERN EUROPE. BY FAILING TO ADJUST RAPIDLY
ENOUGH OR FAR ENOUGH, WE RISK FORFEITING THE
RESPECT FROM OTHERS WHICH WE NEED AS LEADER OF THE
ALLIANCE AND IN THAT WAY DAMAGING OUR PRESTIGE AND
INFLUENCE. THIS IS A SUBTLE AND IMMEASURABLE
PROCESS BUT SO ARE ALL HISTORIC TRENDS. RESPECT
AND PRESTIGE ARE NOT MERE DIPLOMATIC PRINCIPLES,
THEY ARE THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR POSURE AND OUR
CAPABILITY AS A WORLD POWER.

PART II: A NEW APPROACH

24. IT IS FOR THE ABOVE REASONS THAT THE FOREMOST
AIM OF A POLICY REVIEW SHOULD BE TO TAKE AN ENTIRELY
FRESH APPROACH AND DEFINE OUR POLICY TOWARD ITALY IN
A NEW WAY. THIS DEFINITION SHOULD START FROM THE
PREMISE THAT THE PARAMOUNT AIM OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY
IS NEITHER MORE NOR LESS THAN TO MAINTAIN THE EAST-
WEST BALANCE. IT WILL HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT ITALY
HAS NO ESSENTIAL ROLE IN THIS BALANCE. THE POLICY
SHOULD HAVE AS ITS EXPLICIT COROLLARY THAT THE UNITED
STATES WILL CONTINUE TO DO ITS UTMOST TO MAINTAIN
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY COOPERATION WITH
ITALY AS A MEMBER OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE BUT
THAT, LIKE ALL MEMBERS OF THIS ALLIANCE, ITALY WILL
BE ALLOWED TO MAKE HER OWN POLITICAL CHOICES, EVEN FORCED
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TO MAKE THOSE CHOICES. NOW THAT THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT
ABOUT OUR OWN POSITION, WE WILL HAVE TO BE FULLY
PREPARED TO LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR DECISIONS.
DESPITE THE RISKS IN THIS, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT
THERE IS IN FACT LITTLE OR NOTHING WE CAN DO TO SOLVE

ITALY'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THAT OUR
ROLE IS ONE NOT OF GUIDANCE OF ITALY BUT OF ADJUSTMENT
TO ITALIAN DEVELOPMENTS.

25. THREE MAJOR CONCLUSIONS WOULD FOLLOW FROM THIS
FORMULATION OF POLICY. FIRST, THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
SHOULD BEGIN TO PLAN FOR A DIFFERENT ITALY THAN THE
ONE WE HAVE BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO DEALING WITH IN THE PAST.
WE SHOULD ABANDON THE NEGATIVE APPROACH IMPLICIT IN
OUR CURRENT POLICY OF FIGHTING EVERY STEP OF
THE WAY A PROCESS-INCREASING COMMUNIST INFLUENCE--
WHICH WE REGARD AS INEVITABLE. TO PURSUE SUCH A TACTIC WILL
SIMPLY MAKE US APPEAR INFLEXIBLE AND POWERLESS.
SECOND, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO PREPARE PUBLIC AND
CONGRESSIONAL OPINION FOR THE POLITICAL CHANGES IN
ITALY SO THAT MISUNDERSTANDING AND RANCOR WILL BE MINI-
MIZED AND THE UNITED STATES ABLE TO ADJUST TO THE
NEW SITUATION SMOOTHLY. THE BIDEN REPORT ON WEST
EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES IN 1977 IS AN ENCOURAGING
SIGN THAT THIS PROCESS MAY NOT BE AS DIFFICULT AS
MIGHT HAVE BEEN THOUGHT. THIRD, IT WILL BE OF THE UTMOST
IMPORTANCE IN THE FUTURE FOR THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
TO AVOID A PETULANT ATTITUDE AND PUNITIVE ACTIONS
EITHER IN SUCH WAYS AS UNILATERAL STATEMENTS
AND ACTIONS, OR THROUGH SUCH INSTITUTIONS AS THE IMF
OR BY MEANS OF INTIMIDATING WARNINGS BY SACEUR. CLOSE
RELATIONS AND PRACTICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN ITALY
AND THE UNITED STATES WILL BE MORE RATHER THAN LESS
IMPORTANT IF THE COMMUNIST ROLE CONTINUES TO GROW.

26. IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT "DOING SOMETHING"
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TO "STOP COMMUNISM" IS ONE OF THE MOST POTENT
DIALECTICAL ARGUMENTS AVAILABLE TO DISARM THOSE
WHO ADVOCATE NON-INTERVENTION. BUT, AS EDWARD GIBBON
OBSERVED, "FROM ENTHUSIASM TO IMPORTURE THE STEP
IS PERILOUS AND SLIPPERY." THEREFORE, THOSE WHO
PROPOSE ACTION SHOULD BE CALLED UPON TO PROVIDE PER-
SUASIVE ANSWERS TO SEVERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT SUCH
ACTION: IS IT LEGITIMATE IN THE OVERALL
CONTEXT OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY GOALS; IS IT NECESSARY,
WILL IT BE EFFECTIVE AND, IF NONE OF THE ABOVE, IS
ACTION NOT FOR ITS EFFECTIVENESS BUT FOR AN
ULTERIOR FUNCTION AT HOME?HOLMES

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ROME04041
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780107-0552
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803109/aaaadopx.tel
Line Count: 597
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 758d24b9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 11
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ROME 3542
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3124668
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: A DISSENTING VIEW OF AMERICAN POLICY IN ITALY
TAGS: PEPR, PINR, US, IT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/758d24b9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014